

Cawnpore
12th Mar. 96

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My dear Pippa,

Oh! what a surprise.

A sudden eruption has occurred and here I am sitting in the Egyptian Hall of Mysteries at Cawnpore - As follows. You must know that Cummins D.E. retires on the 15th of this month after a long and meritorious &c. by which means I get promoted from A.E. II (Rs 450) to A.E. I (Rs 600.)

This being so it would evidently be bad business to stay in Calcutta, if I could help it, where it

costs about twice as much as other places on the line to live, so on Thursday last I laid the case before Robertson with much urgency. (I had already laid it several times but he always put it off). However this time he agreed to let me go if anybody could be got to replace me.

I wanted to go on construction, but it was found that no one could be got instead of me unless someone was called back from construction, so many people having already been taken from the main line. Besides which Robertson said that

if I wanted to go on furlough at the end of the year, it was hardly worth while to go on construction especially as nothing is now going on except plans estimates &c. He also said that he strongly advised me to take ^{my} leave as soon as I could, not believing in presenting the Co. with it, and there would be lots of construction going on when I came back. We then searched for a place on the main line for me to go to and the only available one was found to be Cawnpore where it was settled I should go on the 15th.

The man then at Caunpore was Scott who was going up to Muzsoorie to build the new schools, and on Friday morning Robertson said that on thinking it over he thought I had better go off at once so as to catch Scott before he went which would save my taking it over from Hardy who would know hardly anything about it having been there such a short time. So with a fearful rush I packed up and left Calcutta on Saturday, arriving here on Sunday to find that Scott had gone two days before,

and Hardy here not knowing very much more about the place than myself.

Cawnpore is a great manufacturing place and there are dozens of big mills here; cotton, woollen, jute, sugar &c and the chief part of my work will be ~~making~~ extending a siding which goes through the town past several of these mills. The extension, which has been started, is about a mile long, so I shall have some construction after all.

When I arrived, I put my

boxes on a cab and drove
off to Theodore's house where
I arrived as he was in the
middle of dinner. However he
welcomed me with open arms
and I staid there two days
when I went ^{over} to the Asst Eng^r's
house where I now am. It
is a very fine house, the
chief feature being the big
room in the middle. This
is a long room from one end
of the house to the ^{with a very high roof} other, for
about one third of the length
of it the floor is about 3 feet
lower than the rest, with steps

up and huge pillars at the
division painted weirdly in
black speckled with gold -
I call it the Egyptian Hall
of mysteries. The floor of the
lower part has an exquisite
tesselated pavement like a
Roman Villa. I have not
settled down yet having left
most of my things in Calcutta
and am getting on at present
with a knife fork and spoon,
two plates, a teacup, and a
butterdish. Hardy left for
Calcutta this morning.

I must tell you of one

excellent stroke I have made, though you wont in the least understand it. You must know that Cawnpore station yard is interlocked, that is to say all the levers for working the points and signals are put in one cabin and so interlocked with one another by a machine underneath, that when any lever is pulled over you can only pull over the other levers which it is safe to pull, all that would be dangerous are locked. (If you dont twig this papa will explain.) Well in

this cabin 4 of the levers are not interlocked and never have been, that is to say the locks were taken out when the machine was put up as they could not make them work. Robertson told me of this before I came here and told me to have a look at it. I went to the cabin and after a careful examination and greivous thought suddenly discovered how these particular locks worked, (they are different from all the others) and came to the conclusion that they were perfectly correct, put them in.

and they worked beautifully!
Strange but true.

I must now seize
so fare thee well

Ralph

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27 Wilfred street
London S.W.1

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